A

DISCOURSE

AGAINST

Profane Swearing.

For Mony, Swear by no GOD, though you Swear truly; (said *Isocrates.*) *Avoid Swearing, wholly, if you can*; (said *Epictetus.*) *Forbear Swearing about any Matter*, (said *Plato.*) And diverse the like Precepts occur in other *Heathens*; the mention whereof may well serve to strike Shame into many loose and vain People, bearing the Name of *Christians*.

It is a Sin, of all others, Provocative of *Divine Judgment*: 'Tis very noxious to *Human Society*. It often brings the Practiser of it into the most horrible Sin of *Perjury*. *False Swearing* naturally springeth out of *much Swearing*. It disparages him that uses it, and derogates from his *Credit*. 'Tis gross *Rudeness*. And 'tis an insolent Defiance of the common Profession, the Religion, the Law of our Country, which disalloweth and condemneth it.

See Dr. *Barrow's* Sermon against rash and vain Swearing.

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8

To the Right Honourable

Sir GERARD CONYERS, Kt.

LORD MAYOR of the City of *London*.

THIS Discourse offers its Service to your Lordship *as the* principal Magistrate *of this great* City; *and as you are therefore principally concerned, to suppress those* Vices, *which would* overthrow a City and Kingdom. *But besides your high Station, your Lordship's* personal Character *is such, as encourages me to hope, this will not be an unacceptable* Present *to you. And the inscribing your Lordship's Name be-*

fore a Discourse of this Nature, I promise my self will recommend it, (if your Lordship please to favour it) to the reading and Acceptance of others.

WHEN there is occasion to punish profane Swearers, *might they be made* wiser *and* better, *such Punishments would become really* wholsome, *and serviceable to the Publick. Probably, by putting something of* this Nature *into their Hands, such an End might be obtained. For tho' some wicked Wretches, may be got to such a Pitch, as to despise both* Instruction, *and* Correction; *yet, it is to be hoped, this is the Case only of a* Few. *As to* others, *such a* Discourse against Swearing, *given to them at the time of their* Conviction, *or put into the Hands of others for them, might prove particularly useful. When the* Pen *and the* Sword *are thus united, for the* Reformation *of a* Vicious Age, *it may justly be expected the Success will be more considerable.*

I BEG your Lordship *will give me leave to say on this Occasion, that both*

the Credit of Religion, *and the Good of the* State, *call for* vigorous Endeavours *to stop this growing Impiety of* Profane Swearing.

WHAT Reverence can there be in using the Name of GOD *in our* Prayers, *while Men are accustomed, and allowed, to make light of that Name, and to abuse it in their* common Conversation? *Or what can publick* Preaching *avail, in solemnly telling Men of the Danger of* Damnation *for their* Sins, *when, upon every slight Occasion, they are us'd to* damn *one another's* Blood, *and* Souls, *to the Pit of* Hell. *There is not a Man who has any* Fear *of* GOD, *and Concern for* Religion, *but is daily wounded, and* cut to the Heart, *in hearing these things.*

YOUR Lordship *cannot but be sensible, that the Power of the* Magistrate, *and the Good of the* State, *call for a Suppression of this horrid Wickedness. There will be no securing the* Credit *of an* Oath, *without punishing such as* profane *it. To make a* common Prac-

tice

tice *of* Swearing, *is that which turns Oaths into mere* Trifles *with Men; and by this Means the Publick loses all that* Security *and* Advantage, *which our* Laws *suppose to arise from them. The* Power *of Magistrates, and Princes, will never be rever'd as it ought to be, so long as the* Fountain *of all Honour, and Power, is treated Vilely and with Contempt.*

I will add but one thing more; that nothing in the World would be so effectual, to bring unruly Spirits *into Order and Subjection, as a* resolute *and* constant *punishing them for this execrable Sin. I am, with great Respect,*

My Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient,

and very humble Servant.

An Account of the LAWS against *Swearing*.

BY an Act *made* 21 Jac. I. cap. 20. *in the Year* 1623, *it is declared*; " *For as much* " *as all profane Swearing and Cursing is* " *forbidden by the Word of* GOD, *be* " *it therefore enacted by the Authority of the* " *then Parliament, that no Person or Persons should* " *from thenceforth profanely Swear or Curse, upon* " *the Penalty of forfeiting* one Shilling *to the use of* " *the Poor for every* Oath *or* Curse.

" *IF any refuse to pay, upon Conviction, the* " *Money is to be levied by* Distress. *And in defect* " *of Distress, the Offender is to be set in the* Stocks " *if above twelve Years old, if under that Age he* " *is to be* whip'd *by the* Constable, *or by the* Parent, " *or* Master *if present.*

THIS Act was appointed to continue till the next Parliament. And then in 3 *of* Charles I. cap. 4. 1627, *it was further continued. And another Reviver and Continuation of it was in the same Reign* 1640.

BUT in the Year 1694, *the* 6 *and* 7 *of* William III. cap. 11. *there was a new Act passed, entitled, an* Act for the more effectual suppressing Profane Cursing, and Swearing. *Wherein it is appointed,* " *That any Person or Persons who should* " *Swear or Curse, in the* Presence, *or* Hearing *of* " *any Justice of Peace, Mayor, Bailiff, or other* " *head Officer; or should be convicted before any of* " *these, by the Oath of* one Witness *(provided, the* " *Information be within* ten Days *after the Offence* " *committed)*

" *committed) that such should forfeit and pay to the* " *Use of the Poor the respective Sums after menti-* " *oned; that is to say,* every Servant, Day Labour- " er, common Soldier, *and* common Seaman, *is,* " *for every Offence, to pay* one Shilling. *Every* " *other Person is to pay* two Shillings. *And, if* " *after Conviction, such Persons offend a* second " *Time, they are to* pay double. *And if a third* " *time,* treble *to what was paid for the* first Of- " fence.

" *THE Money is to be levied by* Distress. *And* " *in defect of Distress, the Offender is to be* set in " the Stocks, *if above sixteen. If under that Age* " *to be* whip'd *by the* Constable, *or by the* Parent, " Guardian, *or* Master *of such Offender in the pre-* " *sence of the Constable.*

" MAGISTRATES *that wilfully and wittingly* " omit their Duty *in the Execution of this Act, are* " *to forfeit* five Pounds; *the one Moiety to the use* " *of the* Informer, *to be recovered by Suit, in any* " *of his Majesty's Courts of* Westminster.

BUT " *if any* Action *or* Suit *be commenced against* " *any Person, for* doing, *or* causing to be done " *any thing in* pursuance of this Act, treble Costs " *shall be allowed to such in Defence of themselves.*

" *THIS Act is appointed to be read in Churches* " four Times *every Year, immediately after* Morn- " ing Prayer.

SUCH a Law *as this, were it duly executed, would soon bring Men to* fear *an* Oath; *or it would lessen the Poors Rates, which are now grown so great a Burden; all Forfeitures upon Conviction of Swearing being for the use of the Poor.*

A DISCOURSE AGAINST *Profane Swearing.*

JAMES V. 12. former part.

But above all things, my Brethren, swear not——

INTRODUCTION.

THIS Epistle of St. *James* was written, to warn the *Jews* of those grievous calamities and desolations, that were just at *the door*. As in ℣. 9th of this chapter. And, hereupon, to encourage those that were *good* to be humble and patient, and to hold fast their integrity even to *the end*. And if

it might be, our Apostle endeavours to reclaim the *wicked* and profane, that their iniquities might not prove their ruin. Amongst other crying Sins, which he warns them to avoid and forsake, He insists in an especial manner on that of *Profane Swearing*. *Above all things, my brethren, swear not.*

IT may be read, *before all things*; (πρὸ πάντων;) as if it had been said, don't fall in with that wicked custom of many, *before every thing they say*, to put an *Oath*. And thus all *customary needless swearing* is forbidden here, as it is all along in Scripture condemned, for a very grievous Sin.

IT may also on some accounts be read, *above all things* swear not; (as I shall shew hereafter:) But while St. *James* would have this minded *above* other things, how many are there that mind this the *least* of all things!

SOME have thought these words are not here directed to *Christians*, but to the *Jews*, with whom profane swearing was very common; because this Epistle is inscrib'd, in general, *to the twelve Tribes scattered abroad*. Swearing can hardly be supposed one of the spots of GOD's Children; since *Peter*, when he was charged with being a *Disciple* of CHRIST, thought he could not more effectually take off that suspicion, than by *cursing* and *swearing*; it being well known of the Disciples of JESUS, that they durst not *allow themselves* in this sin. But possibly some of the looser sort of those who were *called Christians* might fall into this common and prevailing sin, as well as other evils complain'd of in this *Epistle*. A vice this is, that has most scandalously prevail'd in this *city*, and *nation*, notwithstanding the *Christian* name is named upon us. How many are there that professedly glory in this name, whose ill tongues, and ill lives, are a discredit and contradiction to it?

SWEARING

SWEARING is a most provoking sin, and what will by no means be excused. Mens being betrayed into it by provocations, or by their own passions, will not be admitted as a sufficient Plea for so heinous an Iniquity. *God will not hold him guiltless, that takes his name in vain*, let the pretence for it be what it will. *Because of swearing*, says the *Prophet* of old, the *land mourneth*, *Jer.* xxiii. 10. And the Apostle *James* in the words I have read, seems more especially concerned to possess *Christians* with a fear and dread of *this sin*. *Above all things, my brethren, swear not*. From which words I shall endeavour to offer what I hope through the Blessing of God may be serviceable to correct this provoking and abounding sin.

THEY are wretched Interpreters of Scripture, that understand this *Text*, as if it condemned *necessary oaths* for ending of strife; since (as a known Expositor observes,) 'tis but to *confirm* such oaths, by preserving the *due reverence* of them. But all *profane customary swearing*, though it be by the Creatures; and all *false swearing* upon any solemn and just occasion, by GOD himself, must be look'd upon as amongst those evils and abominations that cry to heaven for vengeance.

WE should therefore be concerned not only to avoid such a sin our selves, but to do all that lies in our power for preventing and correcting it in others. In order to this, I would shew,

1. THE *Greatness* of the sin of *Profane swearing*, and the evils to which it exposes men.
2. ANSWER some *excuses* that common swearers offer for themselves.
3. LAY down some *directions for dealing with* profane swearers, and for enabling them, who are desirous so to do, to avoid and to leave off this sin.

I. Let me shew you *the greatness of the sin of Profane Swearing*, and the *Evils* to which it exposes Men. And here will you seriously consider the following things.

1. *THINK how impious it is, to bring so sacred a thing as an oath into contempt.*

Some have imagined that this place of St. *James*, and those words of *our Saviour*, *Matt.* v. 34. forbid *all taking of Oaths*. But, for their explication, let it be consider'd; there were *three* very corrupt opinions, or traditions, amongst the *Jews*, which are practised upon by too many amongst *Christians*. (1.) The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* taught, that there was no harm in swearing by the *creatures*; but whenever they had a mind to strengthen what they said by such forms of speaking, they might swear by the *Heavens*, or the *Earth*, or *Jerusalem*, or the *Temple*, or the like. (2.) They farther very mischievously taught, that those oaths, which did not make *express mention* of the name of God, were not *binding*. So our Saviour charges them, *Matt.* xxiii. 16. with teaching the people, that *whosoever sware by* the Temple *it was nothing*. But our blessed Lord tells them, that if such kind of oaths were rightly consider'd, swearing by the *Temple* would be found the same thing, as swearing by *Him that dwelleth therein*; and swearing by *heaven*, was a swearing by the *throne* of God, and *Him* that *sitteth thereon*. (3.) They also propagated this corrupt notion of Oaths, that even swearing by the *name* of God was not a sin, provided they swore what was *true*. Now in opposition to these traditions, and doctrines concerning Oaths, our Saviour (in *Mat.* v. 34.) says, *Swear not at all:* That is, not at all by the *Creature*, as he himself there

there explains it: And not at all *by the Creator* himself in *common converſation*. In this ſenſe it is that St. *James* ſays in the Text, *Above all things, my Brethren, ſwear not*. Don't give way to *petty Oaths*; and don't needleſly and profanely uſe the *name* of God in any part of your converſation. Let it be a great occaſion, a juſt occaſion, a neceſſary occaſion, whenever you ſwear by the *name* of God: For if you ſwear in common converſation, you will hereby throw contempt upon the name and authority of the *Lord Jehovah*, and make one of the moſt ſacred things in the world, [an Oath,] become inſignificant and contemptible.

But now, that Oaths may be taken on ſome occaſions, it appears fully, in that an Oath is a part of *Worſhip* or *Homage*, and therefore joined with Fear and Service, *Deut.* vi. 13. *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and ſerve him, and ſhalt ſwear by his name*. This we find was not only required upon great and ſolemn occaſions in the *Old* Teſtament, but likewiſe practiſed in the *New*. 2 *Cor.* i. 23. St. *Paul* calls God for a *record*. As alſo, *Phil.* i. 8. And in *Revel.* x. 6. The *Angel* that ſtood upon the Sea, and upon the Earth, is ſaid to *lift up his hand*, and *ſwear by him that liveth for ever and ever*. Theſe Paſſages, with others that might be mentioned, plainly ſhew that Oaths may be uſed upon very great and ſolemn occaſions, but not otherwiſe.

For men, therefore, to make ſwearing by the *name* of God a common thing, is to deſecrate one of the moſt awful Inſtitutions in the world. By trifling with the *name* of God, and making uſe of it upon every occaſion, they bring that ſacred name into contempt; and render it of no uſe at thoſe times, when all ſhould ſtand in awe of it, and make ſolemn appeals to it. Hence it is that when they themſelves come to be in affliction and diſtreſs,

distress, that name which should be a *strong Tower* to them, will afford them no relief and comfort. They have so accustomed themselves to slight it, and to make it of no esteem, that they have no Heart to apply to it. Perhaps it may fill them with terror, if they come to be sensible how vilely and basely they have treated it. A man might as well take the *sacred Elements* of Bread and Wine from a *Communion-Table*, and trample them with disdain under his feet; as take the *holy* and *reverent Name* of God, in a profane and wicked manner, into his Lips, and upon every loose occasion to throw out *oaths* and *curses*.

2. *THINK how directly this sin of Swearing contradicts the Profession of being Christians, and what injury it does to the Christian name in the World.*

Christianity teaches us to be so just, and sincere, and true in all our conversation, that a bare *asserting* or *denying* things may be sufficient: So the latter part of the verse, where the Text is, runs; *Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation.* That is, let it suffice you to affirm, or deny a thing, as there is occasion; and be sure to *stand* to your word, and be true to it, so as to give no occasion for your being *suspected of falshood*; and then you will be kept from the condemnation of *backing* what you say with *rash oaths*, and from profaning the name of God to justify your selves. Now after this is made a part of our Religion, and a necessary part of the Character of a Christian; (as by our Saviour himself it is, in the vth of *Matthew* above quoted, as well as by St. *James*;) how can any man take a more effectual course, to shew he is no disciple of Christ, than by cursing and swearing? Thus St. *Peter* (as has been hinted already) when he *denied Christ*, thought

thought it would ſufficiently free him from all *ſuſpicion* of being one of his followers, to *curſe* and to *ſwear*. After this he concluded, he ſhould no more be accounted a diſciple of *Jeſus* in that company. So directly does profane ſwearing prove, that men are not *real* Chriſtians, whatever they may call themſelves.

For common ſwearers to frequent the *Chriſtian Aſſemblies*, and to go under the name of *Chriſtians*, is a very great prejudice to Chriſtianity amongſt Infidels. The civilized *Heathens* uſed the names of their Gods with greater reverence than our *ſwearing Chriſtians* do. The name of our Lord Jesus is deſpiſed and blaſphemed amongſt the *Turks*, on this very account as much as any thing, that ſuch *horrid Oaths* and *Imprecations* are uſed by ſuch as call themſelves Chriſtians. Swearing is moſt diſhonourable to our profeſſion, 'tis a flat contradiction to it, and tends to deſtroy, inſtead of propagating it in the world.

3. *'TIS a Sin that God will not ſuffer to go unpuniſh'd.*

The third Commandment expreſly ſays, *the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that takes his name in vain*, *Exod.* xx. 7. The breakers of this commandment ſhall not eſcape the judgment of God; though they may eſcape puniſhment from men. This ſin ſpeaks ſuch an *enmity* to God in the hearts of men, that his own glory and honour neceſſarily requires the puniſhment of it. *Pſ.* cxxxix. 20. *Thine Enemies take thy name in vain.* Immediate Judgments do not indeed commonly fall upon ſuch; though in ſome caſes it has been ſo, that men have actually been *ſtruck dead* with oaths and blaſphemies in their mouths. But he certainly ſhewed himſelf an haſty, paſſionate man, who turned *Atheiſt*, becauſe a Thunderbolt from Heaven did not ſtrike

dead

dead a false and profane swearer, that *swore him out of his right.* God may suffer a profane wretch to go on in his wickedness for some time, but at last he will certainly *set his sins in order* before his face: And the more his account is swell'd, by being long spared, the more dreadful will his confusion be, and the heavier his condemnation at last.

Our Saviour tells us, *that every idle word which men speak,* (every loose vain way of talking concerning God and religion, and all fruitless sinful discourse) they shall *give an account of in the day of judgment, Matt.* xii. 36. And therefore much more shall they give an account of their Oaths and Blasphemies. Now let me put the case, That a profane swearer was sure he should have all his oaths *set down* in *all companies* where he should come; and that he must suffer the *penalty* which the *Laws* of our Land appoint, that is, be obliged to pay a *Shilling* for every Oath: And suppose the score daily running on for twenty, thirty, forty years; but that the *whole sum* of what his oaths amounted to should certainly be demanded of him, one time or other; would not this be a restraint upon him? —— Suppose farther; when the demand should come to be made, he *not being able to pay* for the millions of oaths he had sworn, he was then to be condemned to some *exquisite torments,* and to end his life with serpents, toads, and the most loathsome creatures, in a prison or a dungeon; would not this make a man conceive very dreadful things of the sin of swearing? And dost thou consider, oh man, that the *invisible* God is recording all thine *Oaths* and *Blasphemies,* and though he may spare thee a long time, that he will at last call thee to a *strict account,* and deliver thee to *Devils,* those most dreadful Executioners, *till thou shalt pay the very uttermost farthing?* God will *not hold him guiltless,* that *takes his name in vain.*

4. CONSIDER that the *Sin of Swearing has of all others the least temptation to it*, and therefore there is the greater guilt and wickedness in committing it.

OTHER sins have something to recommend them, and to draw and excite men to the commission of them; either Gain, or Pleasure, or Reputation, or something that a man proposes to himself by them: But in profane swearing there can be no pretence to any of these. 'Tis owing to a fearlessness of the Almighty, and is inspired only by pride or passion, and an horrible audaciousness and impudence of spirit. Our old famous Poet *Herbert* writes very seriously to this purpose,

His name, who made thy mouth, take not in vain:
It gets thee nothing, *and hath* no excuse:
Lust and Wine plead pleasure, *Avarice pleads* gain;
But the cheap swearer *thro' his open sluce*
Lets his soul run for nought, *as little fearing.*
Were I an Epicure, *I could hate swearing.*

And then he very well adds,

The cheapest *sins most* dearly *punish'd are;*
Because to shun *them is so* cheap.———

HENCE it is that one of our Divines observes, "swearing is worse than *Epicurism.*" There is something more *bestial* and *brutish*, indeed, in irregular and excessive gratifications of the bodily appetites; but there is something more *hellish* and *Diabolical*, in profaning and blaspheming the name of GOD. That Text lies strong against swearers, *Let them be ashamed* (or confounded) *that transgress, without cause*, *Ps.* xxv. 3. Sooner or later such causeless offenders shall be confounded utterly.

5. CONSIDER that *the Sin of Swearing is the*

most foolish of all others, and loses the very Ends it aims at.

'Tis commonly an Indication of an empty unfurnished mind, that does not know how to produce any thing in conversation, that shall have weight or truth enough in it to gain regard. Oaths are thrown in to fill up the sentences, that would otherwise be *wofully trifling* and silly; or to give *credit* to some story that is related, or to something that is asserted, which otherwise men suspect would hardly be believed; or perhaps the swearer thinks that the sound of an oath has something *great* and *bold* in it, and he had rather be esteem'd *bold* than *wise*. But such a *foolish sin* is swearing, that it does not only propose Ends mean and *foolish* in themselves, but it likewise loses *those very ends* which it does propose.

Instead of making silly and impertinent Talk *appear more considerable*, it really makes it *odious* and abominable. A man that talks weakly and foolishly may not perhaps be much esteem'd or minded; but the adding oaths to his weak talk, make him *abhor'd* by every *serious person*, and commonly *press'd* the *harder*, and more questioned by men that have any ends to *serve upon him*, or that can *divert* themselves by provoking him.

Again, the swearer, instead of *gaining credit* to the things he asserts, or relates, makes himself appear so rash, and one of so little conscience in his regards to God, by the frequent use of oaths, that there is no judicious person will believe he makes conscience of speaking truth to *men*, and keeping to what is just and right. If a man be suspected of breaking the IXth Commandment by *lying* or *false witnessing* of things; to hear him break the III^d^ Commandment by swearing and taking God's name in vain, will be far from altering any ones ill opinion of him: Unless he should meet with per-

sons

ſons ſo fooliſh as to think, while he makes nothing of the III^d Commandment, that he yet fears to break any *other*; and thus will take the breach of one command, for a *ſecurity* that he will not break another: Such is the folly of propoſing to gain credit or belief, by mens uſing themſelves to ſwear and profane the name of God.

And then as to the ſwearer's chuſing to be accounted a *Bold man*, and a man of Courage, rather than a Wiſe man, he is horribly fooliſh to take *this way* of ſhewing his Boldneſs: For this will either prove him a *mad man*, or (what he is afraid of being thought) a *Coward*. If a man deſpiſe or profane the name of that being who is *able to ſtrike him dead*, and who will ſooner or later take vengeance upon him for ſuch impiety, only to ſhew himſelf bold amongſt *thoſe that dare not thus diſhonour their maker*; This is only to ſhew himſelf horribly adventurous, and to act the part of a *diſtracted* man, in wounding and expoſing himſelf to miſery for no body knows what. On the other hand, if he becomes a ſwearer to gain the regards only of *thoſe who are daringly bold and wicked this way* as well as himſelf, and that he is *afraid* of loſing the friendſhip of his ſwearing acquaintance, or of being *hector'd*, *reproach'd*, and *ill-treated* by them, if he ſhould not ſwear as They do; then he is really a *Coward*, let him put on never ſo much of the appearance of Courage. Take it which way one will, the folly of ſwearing is ſo great, that it cannot ſo much as ſecure the ends it *pretends* to aim at, although theſe in themſelves are very *low* and *weak* too.

6. This ſin, when it *generally prevails*, brings *temporal Judgments and Calamities on a people*.

OUTWARD Punishments were appointed by the Law not only to *Swearers*, but to those that heard any *Oath* or *Blasphemy* uttered against GOD, and did not immediately discover it, that a stop might be put to such Impiety. *Levit.* v. 1. *If a soul sin, and hear the Voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen, or known of it*; [whether he has been present himself, or certainly inform'd by those that have;] *if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity:* The Punishment due to the Swearer, or Blasphemer, shall be born by Him. If, therefore, this sin prevail so as that there is none to utter and to tell it, when they hear the voice of swearing, Punishment must certainly come upon such a People.

HENCE it is that the Prophet *Zechariah* speaking of the *Curse* that should go over the face of the Earth, and the *Judgments* that GOD would execute in the sight of all, says, *Every one that sweareth shall be cut off:* i. e. according to the Threatnings of GOD's *Law* on *that side*, or part of it, which denounces Judgments on those that sin against the commandments of the first Table. *Zech.* v. 3, 4. See also *Zeph.* i. 5, 6. and *Hosea* iv. 2, 3.

LET Us now, of this city and nation, bring this to our selves. What reason have we to *tremble* because of GOD's *Judgments*, if some care be not taken, and some more than ordinary zeal excited, to check this *growing Evil* amongst us? What place of concourse can we now come into, or what streets can we walk, and not meet with the most execrable Oaths and Curses? I wish to GOD that every *Magistrate* in this *City*, and throughout this *Kingdom* might be animated to do his Duty in *correcting* and *punishing* this *Vice*. One would think, that as ever they expect *their name* and *office* should be honoured, they should take care that the veneration due to the name of GOD should

be

be preſerved. They *that honour* God, He *will honour*; but *they that deſpiſe him, ſhall be lightly eſteem'd.* I wiſh all that have any fear of God upon their own ſpirits, and any ſenſe of Religion, would ſtand up for God againſt theſe deſpiſers of his Name, his Authority, and his Law. A ſerious *Writer* formerly bewailing the ſad ſtate of this Kingdom, ſays, "Though the multitude and va-
" riety of our ſins be ſo great, that 'tis a puzzling
" taſk to determine to what particular crimes our
" calamities are due, yet certainly our oaths are
" too conſiderable an acceſſion to our ſins, not to
" infuſe a ſuitable proportion of gall and worm-
" wood into the bitter cup, theſe gaſping nations
" drink ſo deeply of; and whatſoever may feather
" thoſe fatal arrows that deſtroy theſe nations, I
" am confident our oaths do ſtrangely point and
" ſharpen them." Let every man then that loves and honours his God, plead his cauſe againſt the profaners and deſpiſers of his name. Let every one that loves his own *Soul*, and values its peace and ſalvation, avoid this ſin of ſwearing above all others. And let every one that loves his *Country*, do what he can to prevent the ruin of it, by diſcountenancing and teſtifying againſt that ſin, which *makes a land mourn.* And let every *ſerious Chriſtian*, that can do no more, at leaſt *mourn in ſecret* for the oaths he hears in publick places, and in the open ſtreets. And let us all earneſtly plead with God to *appear*, when men are thus *making void his Laws.*

I doubt there are ſome people, who through the commonneſs of this ſin, and their being daily inured to it, grow eaſy with it, and inſenſible of our common danger. But would you think a *peſtilence* the leſs dangerous, becauſe it ſhould come to be *generally diſperſed?* Or can you think a nation *leſs offenſive* to Heaven for its being *generally* corrupted?

corrupted? Or rather, is it not then ripeſt for judgments, and neareſt to them? It is with guilty Kingdoms as with leaking Boats (to uſe the compariſon of a very elegant pen) where the greater the number of Paſſengers is, the more *ſpeedily* the Veſſel ſinks. When God looks down from Heaven and ſees that *all have corrupted their way*, then is his time to puniſh ſuch a nation and people.

II. I PROCEED now to anſwer ſome *Excuſes* which Profane Swearers make for themſelves.

WHAT I have to offer under this head will I hope be ſerviceable in theſe two reſpects; namely, to perſuade thoſe, who have been *accuſtomed* to this ſin, to forſake it, when I ſhall make it appear that their ſin is without excuſe; and to ſhew thoſe who are *not guilty* of this ſin *themſelves*, how to deal with *ſuch as are*.

Objection 1. IT is alledg'd by ſome, that they mean no *harm* when they ſwear; and that it is rather *owing to cuſtom* than to any thing of a profane temper, that they are guilty of this ſin. Such oaths they flatter themſelves are no great ſins, but what a merciful God will overlook and forgive.

Anſwer. This plea makes the ſin *greater*, inſtead of excuſing it, to ſay that their ſwearing is owing to *Cuſtom*. If a man was accuſed for *ſtealing*, would any one think it a good plea before the Judge for ſuch a man to ſay, he had been ſo *uſed to Thieving*, that he knew not how to quit it? A man had as good plead uſe and cuſtom for breaking *One* Commandment, as *another*. When ſins thus become *habitual*, they are in the ſight of God the more abominable, inſtead of being more excuſeable.

Weak

Weak is th' Excuſe, that is on Cuſtom built:
Uſe may increaſe, but leſſens not the guilt.

I, but when you do ſwear, you ſay, perhaps, God *forgive me that I ſhould ſwear ſo*, or ſomething of that nature, and this ſhews that it does not proceed from a *wicked temper*; therefore you think God will be merciful to you, and pardon this frailty of yours.

To this I reply; that your crying *God forgive me* may be as cuſtomary a thing with you, as your ſwearing; and though you uſe ſuch words, yet you do not *heartily* deſire to be forgiven. If a Robber on the high way ſhould only plead for a pardon, that he might have licenſe to rob and murder again; and would not accept of a pardon upon thoſe terms, that he ſhould *never* commit a Robbery more, nor do another act of injuſtice; would any one think this man had a ſenſe of Forgiveneſs, or any prevailing deſire of it? So the ſwearer that cuſtomarily, and at times, cries *God forgive me*, but yet means only to paſs the thing off for the preſent, that he may *repeat it* the firſt occaſion again, certainly has no juſt ſenſe of pardon and forgiveneſs. As he pretends that in ſwearing he means no *harm*, ſo neither in forgiveneſs does he mean any great *good*; but the one muſt paſs for words of courſe, as well as the other: Only his ſin becomes aggravated in this reſpect, that his oaths throw contempt upon the *Majeſty* of Heaven, and his manner of aſking forgiveneſs throws contempt upon the *mercy* of Heaven at the ſame time. And what a woful way is this of men's excuſing themſelves, if they would ſeriouſly think of it! To abuſe the name of God, and then aſk his pardon; and then abuſe him again, and then cry mercy; thus to bring both his name and his mercy into contempt!

I, BUT you mean ſo *little harm* that really you *do not know* you ſwear, when others tell you of it; by

by this you are ſure that you intend nothing ill in it.———A ſad ſymptom (as Mr. *Boyle* obſerves) a *deſperate caſe* in the Judgment of Phyſicians, when the Patient voids excrements, and knows not when he does it. You will allow the compariſon, when I add, that nothing can proceed from men *more loathſome* and execrable than Oaths and Curſes.

As *to having no Evil intention:* This is a plea, that with wiſe and conſiderate perſons can avail nothing. 'Tis the joint ſentiment both of *Moraliſts* and *Divines*, that no *goodneſs* of the *Intent* can juſtify a thing in its *own nature evil.* And if a *good intent* will not juſtify an ill action, much leſs can a pretence of meaning *no harm*, at all excuſe you. Our *Actions* may provoke Heaven as well as our *Intentions:* And if we ſay and do things which we *know* God has an averſion to, 'tis to add to the provocation, to pretend we do not *deſign* to diſpleaſe or throw contempt upon him.

Obj. 2. But ſome plead, that they do not *ſwear often:* It is but *now and then* upon ſome *extraordinary provocations* that they are guilty of this ſin; and *others* about them they hear, that ſwear much *oftner*, and much *worſe* than they do.

Anſ. You don't ſwear often: But may not *one* ſuch inſtance of *daring impiety* be enough to condemn you? You now and then profane and abuſe the name of God, but will God hold you *guiltleſs* think you, only becauſe you are *not ſo guilty* as others, when you your ſelves acknowledge you are *guilty now and then?* You are not *ſo* ſick as ſome that are in the greateſt agonies and gaſping their laſt, but you are ill of the *ſame mortal diſtemper*, and is this a ſtate to content your ſelves in! Some are *full* of wounds, but you have only *a few*; however your few may occaſion your *bleeding* to

death

death as well as their many. And to ſay that there are a *multitude* about you that ſwear much *worſe*, and are more guilty of this ſin than you, is only to ſay that there are ſome who deſerve a *hotter place* in Hell than your ſelves; but ſtill Hell and Vengeance is what *you* muſt expect from the Almighty as well as *they*.

But you do not think ſwearing now and then, as you do, can be your damnation and ruin, becauſe you do not find that your ſpirits have any ſuch *terrors* or apprehenſions about it. Alas for you, are there not many that die of *Lethargies*, as well as of raging fevers? May not your inſenſibility of your danger be rather a *ſymptom* of your *approaching Death*, than a ſign of its being well with you? *There is a Generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not waſhed from their filthineſs*, Prov. xxx. 12.

But you'll ſay, why don't I take notice of that part of your plea, that 'tis only *upon extraordinary Provocations you ſwear, and in ſuch caſes where fleſh and blood can't bear the things that you meet with.* That is, fleſh and blood is firſt enflamed and hurried into *ſinful paſſions*, and then you vent theſe in *oaths* and *ſinful words*. And thus you would make *one* ſin an excuſe for *another*, when by adding both together you only declare your ſelves *doubly guilty*. Have not other men met with as great provocations as you, when they have been abuſed in their *good names*, ſpoiled of their *goods*, and at laſt perhaps *barbarouſly uſed* and put to exquiſite torments; and yet they never curs'd or ſwore, but *bleſſed* God, and *prayed* for *man*, in the midſt of all this ill treatment? Will you pretend that your being ſo *grievouſly angry* as to *curſe* and *ſwear*, will excuſe your breach of that apoſtolical precept, *Be angry and ſin not: Eph.* iv. 26. No; your *intemperate anger* is a great crime in the ſight

of God, and your *oaths* and *curses* make it ſtill greater.

Besides; your paſſionate ſwearing is not the way to *remove* or *remedy* any of thoſe evils that give you ſuch diſturbance. Becauſe others provoke and offend *you*, you will vilify the name of your *maker*, and provoke and offend him; and ſo inſtead of ſecuring his favour and merciful protection, to remove your uneaſineſſes, and to keep off from you the things that diſquiet you, he leaves you to continual reſtleſs paſſions, and to the occaſions of exciting them by the perpetual miſtakes or miſmanagements of ſuch as are about you. If you never ceaſe ſin, till you have *nothing* in the world to *provoke* you to it, 'tis likely to be your *final ruin*.

Obj. 3. It is pretended by ſome perſons, that if they do not *ſwear* at thoſe about them, or thoſe under them, they are *not minded* by them; or at leaſt that things are not done ſo diſpatchfully, and carefully, and diligently as they would have them to be; and they often find that ſwearing is neceſſary in order to their being believ'd.

Anſ. A *ſteady conduct*, and a conſtant regard to *Truth* in all you ſay, will ſoon bring thoſe about you to take more notice of you, and to have more reſpect for you, than *ſwearing at them* will do. For you to break God's commands, in order to make others obey *your* commands, is a method that can't long ſucceed. In the caſe of *ſervants*, if you have ſuch as will be made attentive to you, and active for you *only by ſwearing*, you ſhould conſult your own eaſe and happineſs ſo much as to *change* them for thoſe that have better *Senſe*, and better *Wills*. But common reaſoning methinks ſhould inſtruct you thus far, that to teach *children*

or

or *ſervants* to make light of God's commands and of his threatnings (as the III^d Commandment has a peculiar threatning annex'd to it) will make them by degrees to ſlight *your* commands, and all *your anger* and reſentments too. A great deal of that contempt which is now poured upon ſuperiors, is owing to their raſh and paſſionate ſwearing. For let Inferiors once learn to ſwear as their ſuperiors do, and then oaths come to be as little regarded as any thing; and if this be made a mark of greatneſs and authority, *every wretch*, that can but ſwear as roundly and profanely as a *perſon of Figure*, preſently imagines he looks as great as the beſt of them. Where there is *real power* and authority, there can be no need of an oath to procure regard; and where there is *no juſt authority* or power over another, ſwearing makes a man appear very contemptible, and only declares him an impotent Hector, and a profane noiſy Buſtler and Pretender. A would-be-ſomething, which he is not, and an Inſiſter upon thoſe regards from others which no courteſy can incline them to give, and of which his ſwearing and profaneneſs declare him utterly unworthy.

And then, He, that in common converſation ſwears, becauſe he imagines he ſhould not be *believed* without an Oath, judges very wrong of *others*, and really expoſes *himſelf* to much greater ſuſpicion of falſhood. Why ſhould the ſwearer take up an opinion of any that he converſes with, that they are ſo uncharitable as to give no credit to him without ſwearing? Why ſhould he make Them the occaſion and reaſon for his ſin, who never diſcovered any thing of that ſuſpicious, diſtruſtful, incredulous temper that he takes them to be of? A more generous opinion of others, would make profane ſwearing to atteſt things in common converſation a perfectly *needleſs* thing; nay it really

appears to be an *highly affronting* thing, and that even to those you speak to, as well as to God, to conceive they are so distrustful, or so ill-natur'd, as to take nothing that comes from you to be true without being sworn to.

But here you'll give me leave to tell you, that wise and good men do really the *less* credit you, when they hear you swear: For they conclude 'tis your *consciousness* of Falshood in your selves, that makes you think an Oath needful. And I dare say, your swearing Companions lay as *little stress* upon Oaths, as they would do upon any other words and expressions. So that it can't be pretended, if things are duly considered, that swearing in common conversation gives any additional credit or belief to what men say.

'Tis an observation of a Person of Figure upon this head of Oaths, "That for any man to be "known to *make conscience* of an oath, will give "him more credit, than the swearing a *thousand* "*Oaths* will do: It being a visible and remark-"able judgment of the offended Deity upon Oaths, "that the *Number of them* discredits those truths "of which they would persuade you." Suppose a Tradesman should be forced to give *Bond* for every little sum of money he owes or borrows, when others could have the like sums or greater upon their *bare word* or *note*; would you think it for the credit of such a Tradesman that he is come to this pass? As little does it prove any man's truth, to say every thing *upon oath*, which others need only to attest in *plain words*.

Obj. 4. But perhaps some will say, that they only swear to what *is true*, and in this they are so careful, that those who are acquainted with them, may then certainly depend upon any thing they say, when they swear to it.

Ans.

Anſ. 'Tis a pity if the thing you ſpeak be true, that you ſhould give ſo much *reaſon to ſuſpect it* of being falſe, as, the anſwer to the former Objection ſhews, common ſwearing does. Certain it is, that no truth, which you deliver in common converſation, is to be ſupported with an oath: But your *Yea muſt be Yea*, and *your Nay Nay*; your affirming things, and denying them, muſt be ſuch as to appear firm and ſteady to what you ſay. If there be need to affirm a thing *twice*, and to add one *yea* to another; do ſo: Or if there be need to deny it *twice*, and to add one *nay* to another; do this: But our Saviour expreſly ſays, that *whatſoever is more than this, cometh of evil*, and is therefore condemned.

Obj. 5. 'Tis further urged by way of Excuſe amongſt ſome ſwearers, that they do not uſe the *name* of God, and profane *that*; nor dare they ſwear thoſe horrid oaths that ſome do, *by Chriſt's Wounds and Blood*, and the like; they only uſe ſuch words as look *like oaths* to others, and that only when they are in ſuch ſort of Company, that they ſhould be deſpiſed if they did not uſe ſomething of ſuch a nature: Or they only ſwear by their *Faith*, or *Truth*, or by ſome Creature: And therefore they are not guilty of breaking the III^d Commandment, which forbids only a *taking* the awful *name* of God *in vain*.

Anſ. It is a cowardly and childiſh evaſion, to comply with ſwearing company in uſing words ſo *like theirs*, as that they may think you can ſpeak *their language*, and at the ſame time to think you can avoid the guilt of diſpleaſing God. He looks into your thoughts, and knows with what *Intention* you utter thoſe words. You *intend* that others

others ſhould *take them* for oaths, and will not that intention be laid to your charge as a ſin? And if you uſe any kind of Oaths, though never ſo ſmall, as you think, to confirm what you ſay, and to gain the *ſame regards* which others expect by their more dreadful oaths, you are in a lower degree guilty of their ſin. In this you pour contempt directly on your *Saviour's Command*, who has required you not to ſwear *at all* by any *creature*, or with any of this kind of diminutive *Oaths*; *neither by heaven*, nor *earth*, nor any other thing. When you ſpeak any thing *like* the name of God, and break out ſuddenly with a *Dod*, or *Gad*, or any ſuch like expreſſions; "This is, ſays an elegant "Writer, to deal with God himſelf as the Per-"ſecutors of Old did with his faithful ſervants, "firſt to diſguiſe them by putting on the ſkins or "appearance of ſome beaſt, and then worry and "tear them to pieces: So you firſt diſguiſe the "name of God, and then abuſe it, and toſs it about "as profanely and wickedly as others, and ſo de-"ſtroy the honour and reverence due to it.

Besides; your practiſing this kind of oaths for a while, will by degrees lead you to *others*, and greater ones. Or if it ſhould not be ſo, yet you would do well to conſider, that a thouſand leſſer holes may ſink a ſhip, as well as a few greater leaks; and you may be as effectually undone by multiplying what you call little and ſmaller oaths, as by more glaring Blaſphemies and Profaneneſs. That is a very terrible paſſage, *Jerem.* v. 7. *How ſhall I pardon thee for this? Thy Children have forſaken me, and ſworn by them that are no Gods.* Swearing by the Creatures is a branch of Idolatry, of which God ſays, *How ſhall I pardon thee?*

Obj. 6. Another plea that ſwearers urge for themſelves is, that there is ſomething in ſwearing that

that *looks genteel* and *bold*, and gives a man certain airs that make him *more taken notice of* than otherwiſe he would be. And there is ſomething that looks *ſneaking*, and expoſes one to deriſion, to be *afraid* of an Oath, when in company with thoſe that uſe themſelves freely to it.

Anſ. THIS plea is too weak to be owned, even by many of thoſe that are influenced by it. This ſort of ſwearers, the Honourable Mr. *Boyle* obſerves, " are like ſome Savages that lurk in rocks " or woods, with whom it is much more difficult " to draw them out to a battle, than it is to gain " a victory over them." But what he adds upon this head is very juſt, " That thoſe perſons muſt " be thought ſtrangely neceſſitous of meriting " Qualities, that do ſo meanly by their *bad Qua-* " *lities* court your good opinion of them." 'Tis only thoſe who want a due eſteem for themſelves, that will beſtow it upon you, for your putting on ſuch vain and ſinful airs as the ſwearer does. That author adds here——" I, but you think your oaths " will make you taken for a *Gentleman.* You are " miſtaken, ſays he, there is too little *Epicuriſm* " and *chargeableneſs* in this Vice to be attacked to " that Quality. This ſin of ſwearing is ſo cheap " and now grown ſo common, that I wonder (as " he continues to write) our Grandees do not re- " nounce it; although not for the *Vice's* ſake, yet " for the *Company's* ſake;" when your moſt ignorant and deſpicable wretches are now become the moſt profligate ſwearers.

As for its ſhewing your *Courage*, and being a mark of *Valour*; here again you are ſadly deluded. The ſwearer may ſtab and ruin his own *Soul*, to ſhew how *bold* a man he is; but it ſeems he has not boldneſs and courage enough to *reſiſt* the *deriſion* and attacks of thoſe, who may direct the artil-

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lery of *Scoffs* and *Oaths* against him. No; though they make this monstrously rude and barbarous demand upon him, that for the pleasure and credit of *their acquaintance*, he should *break with Heaven*, and make a sacrifice of *himself*, yet he has not the courage to oppose them, or forsake their Company.

I WILL venture to lay down this as an undoubted maxim, that there is no *cowardice* so contemptible, as that which makes a man resign his *highest interests*, and afraid to pursue the dictates of his *own conscience*. And there is no *courage* so great, and just, and reputable, as that which enables a man to *scorn* the *scorners* in the cause of GOD, and to *abhor* those who hate and despise that *worthy name* by which we are called; in all this, bearing up against the greatest opposition that the *fear* of GOD may expose one to. The *Israelites* were wonderfully terrified at the *blackness* of the *Heavens*, and the *quaking* of the *Earth*, at Mount *Sinai*; Thunder, and Lightning, and Smoak, then made them tremble: But in order to conquer all this, *Moses* instructs them in the *true fear* of GOD, see *Exod.* xx. 20. This is *courage indeed*, that will stand the shock of a dissolving world, when the *Swearer* with all his blustering airs, and profane appearance of Boldness, shall *call to rocks and mountains to fall upon him*, and *to hide him from the face of him that sits upon the throne*, and *from the wrath of the Lamb*. One realizing thought of such a day approaching, would for ever banish this plea of the swearer, that *Oaths upon some occasions look genteel and bold, and secure a man from derision*, and the like. He that is afraid or ashamed *now* to own and stand up for the honour of GOD and CHRIST *before men*, the Judge of Quick and Dead will be ashamed of him *before his Father*, and *the holy Angels*; and will condemn him to those torments, which

which he has ſo vainly defied, or impiouſly called for, in damning himſelf and others.

Obj. 7. THERE is one plea *more*, that by this time I would hope ſuch as are driven from the Pleas already anſwered, will make their laſt; and that this alſo they may be helped to overcome. Namely, a pretence that they would *never ſwear, if they could help it*; they deſire to avoid this ſin, and would very gladly leave it, but it appears a matter of inſuperable *difficulty* to quit it, ſo, as to *abſtain wholly* from it.

Anſ. To this I reply, that if there be a true and thorough *willingneſs*, whatever difficulty there may be in breaking off from this ſin, that difficulty is *half overcome*. And if the *Imagination* of difficulty can but be laid aſide, the difficulty it *ſelf* will in a great meaſure vaniſh. Mr. *Boyle* mentions an inſtance of his being inſtrumental to reclaim a *Gentleman* from this vice of ſwearing, " though his vice " was *little younger* than himſelf; and though he " was a very *cholerick* perſon; and though he had " ſtrong apprehenſions, that his endeavours to quit " this ſin could not be ſucceſsful; yet (ſays that " Honourable Perſon) before one *fortnight* was ex- " pired, he obtained ſo viſible a conqueſt over this " ſtubborn Vice, that he had afterwards only thoſe " *relicks* of it to ſuppreſs, which might keep him " from growing proud of ſo *ſudden* a recovery.

THERE is not ſo much difficulty in conquering an Evil Cuſtom of *this kind*, as ſome *other* Vices, which *nature* may fall in with, and which *reaſon* and *intereſt* may be more able to plead for, and ſupport. But were it never ſo difficult, the *Grace* of GOD and his *help* could make it *eaſy* to us to conquer all. And if we are prevailingly diſpoſed to leave any ſin, and pray to GOD as we ought to do

that he would enable us, we shall have no reason to complain that our ceasing to commit any Evil, is an *Impossibility*.

THERE are some Rules and Advices, that if carefully followed, will, through the blessing of GOD, deliver the most *accustom'd Swearer* from the power of this sin. This lead leads me to the

III^d GENERAL HEAD; *To lay down some Directions for enabling those who are desirous so to do, to avoid and leave off this sin; and also to direct others, how they are to deal with such.*

1. I SHALL offer some *Directions* to shew those who have been *accustom'd* to the sin of swearing, but are now desirous to *quit it*, how they may *avoid and leave it off*.—— I shall not here use many words, in recommending the Directions I have to give, but I dare undertake for the success of them where they are carefully followed.

1. BE sure to take *shame* to your selves, and to *reproach* your selves with the *great sin and folly* you have been guilty of, in *profane swearing*. † Think what had become of you, if GOD had shot his thunderbolts, and struck you dead, when you were profaning his name, and despising his all-seeing Eye, and his Almighty Arm. You must impress upon your minds a deep sense of the *Evil of this sin*, and earnestly implore forgiveness of GOD thro' CHRIST, and thus becoming *sorrowful* and *contrite* you may be led to forsake this sin. But *slight* thoughts of it, or a *hasty wish* that you could leave off swearing will not do. Think upon the Divine *threatnings* against this sin: GOD will not *hold those guilt-*

† See *Boyle*'s directions in his Book against Swearing.

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less that commit it; he expects that men should *fear his glorious and fearful name*, or otherwise he will severely punish them. See *Deut.* xxviii. 58, 59. The LORD *will make their Plagues wonderful.*

2. WATCH against an *Impatient Temper*, and all *sudden* and *violent fits of anger*. In order to this you must watch against every thing that would inflame the Blood, and *provoke* to inordinate passions. *Excessive Drinking* must be avoided, if you would avoid passion and swearing; and *Gaming* must be avoided, which is commonly the occasion of high provocations, and dreadful oaths. And you must avoid those people as much as you can, that are *dull and unapprehensive*, or of a *thwarting and contradicting spirit*, till you can converse with them without being provok'd at them.

3. DON'T give way to a *vain Spirit*, and an affectation of appearing *agreeable* to the *loose and profane part of the world*. This has proved a fatal snare to many. Let the innocent, and mild, and humble temper, and way of conversing for which our blessed LORD and his *first* and *best* followers were remarkable, be more your ambition to copy after; and don't be led by the eager passions, or the sinful Expressions, and *vain Airs* of haughty and extravagant People.

4. DON'T *use* your selves to *earnest Asseverations*, and *Protestations*, lest hereby you should be led to think swearing a necessary thing. *As I live*; *As I hope to be saved*; *As I am a Christian*; *I protest before God*; and *God that knows all things knows this and that.* Don't make these expressions common and familiar: Don't think there is need of them. If people won't believe you without these, let them go in their unbelief.

5. *SHUN the Company of customary swearers as much as you can.* I have often wonder'd, how any man that loves and honours the name of GOD

and of CHRIST can bear to hear them profaned and ill treated, and yet make such as are guilty of this Profaneness their Intimates, and chosen Companions. One of our *Divines* observes of those that are civilized, and of some polite taste, yet if they live amongst a *Barbarous people*, they quickly lose the purity of their *own Language*, and have their speech corrupted with the *Barbarisms* that are continually sounding in their Ears; so they that live amongst constant *swearers*, will first lose their *horror* of this Vice, and then be apt to be *infected* with it and fall into it themselves. For this reason, I think even those who are *most free* from swearing, yet should not chuse to make such their *constant companions* as are addicted to this Vice, lest they should be infected by them. And I am sure those that would gain a Victory over themselves, who have lived in this sin, must *for a time* keep out of swearing Company.

6. WHENEVER you are *obliged to take any oath*, let it be done with *great fear and reverence*, and that will prevent and cure your trifling with oaths. The more you think of the awfulness of appealing to an all-seeing Almighty GOD, the more you will dread the thoughts of making such appeals upon low and trivial occasions.

7. IT were adviseable to *lay some penalty on your selves every time you swear*, or *take* GOD'S *name in vain*. The Laws of our Country make *every oath* to be a forfeiture to the Poor: And if every swearer would lay such penalties upon *himself*, and not make the informations of *others* against him necessary, I am persuaded he would much sooner be cured of this Vice. Let the first *object* of *Charity* you meet with, have *that* from you after *every Oath*, which the *Magistrate might exact* if your offence was made known to him. The *Poor* are called GOD'S *Receivers*; and therefore *Trespasses* against

against their LORD, are properly *owned*, in returning something to them. Not that any man is to think he *discharges* himself hereby of the *guilt* of swearing; but by this means he will keep upon his spirit the *remembrance* of his fault: And when he finds how much he is a *loser* by it, he may grow weary of it. Get some *prudent friend* also to be your monitor, and to put you in mind when you swear, and be sure to take their admonitions kindly *.

8. YOU must resolve *at once* to forsake this Vice, and *break it off immediately, and entirely.* Every conviction that you proceed to sin against, will increase the *weight* of your Guilt, and it will give *strength* to sin. This is not a Vice to be *dallied with*, but to be suddenly, resolutely, and with greatest sincerity renounced and forsaken.

9. AND lastly, *constant and fervent Prayer will enable you to subdue this Vice.* If you pray to GOD in a serious and becoming manner, it will fix upon your Spirits such *awful thoughts* of GOD, that you will not be able to go and speak lightly and triflingly, much less *profanely* of that name, which you have been *calling upon*, and professedly paying your homage to: So that Prayer in some measure *gives us* the very thing we ask for. But then besides, it procures *special aids* from above, by which corruptions are conquered, and we are enabled to say that *no iniquity shall have dominion over us.* If you should not conquer this sin so soon as you may wish or expect, don't be discouraged, but still *go on* to pray against it, and to use the means before prescribed. Either Prayer will make you give over *sinning*, or Sin will make you give over *praying*. Let not Sin make you cease Prayer: But *pray always; pray, and faint not*; and you will find that *perseve-*

* See *Boyle's* Discourse against Swearing in the Directions.

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ring in Prayer will make you conquerors over this sin.

2. I SHALL now only add some few hints to those who are *not guilty* of this sin *themselves*, to shew *how they ought to deal with*, and *carry it towards those that are guilty*.

'TIS certainly the Duty of all of us to *lament* the abounding of this Iniquity, and earnestly to *beg* of GOD to direct *Magistrates* and *others*, to take those measures which may be proper for correcting and restraining it, that it may not prove our ruin. I am afraid that many of those oaths that are taken in a way of *Trade*, our *Custom-House* oaths; and many that are taken in Courts of Judgment, *Attesting and Witnessing* Oaths; and many that are taken *by those that bear Offices*, and are put into Places of Trust and Power; with other kind of oaths that might be mentioned; are all of them an occasion of great guilt to many. And I most heartily wish some ways could be found out to *lessen the occasions* of taking oaths, instead of multiplying them. But, surely, if magistrates expect any of these oaths should serve the purposes for which they are intended, there ought to be great care to *preserve* the *sacredness* of an oath, and not to allow of profane and customary swearing, when they are able to correct it.

WHERE any are guilty of this, let them see, by one means or another, that you are *displeased* and *grieved* for them. If they direct their discourse to *you* when they swear, tell them they have *credit* enough with you to be *believed* without swearing; and don't be ashamed or afraid to mention such things as those that *have been laid before you* on this subject, (one, or more of them) whereever you have a convenient opportunity and time for it.

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LET the ſwearer ſee that he really *leſſens himſelf* in your eſteem by his oaths; and let him know that the *name* he throws contempt upon, he owes the greateſt *reverence* to, and you have the higheſt *eſteem* and *affection for* in the world. If you can make no impreſſions either by words or actions upon the ſwearer, while *in his company*, it may be proper, and in ſome caſes it is your duty, to inform a *Juſtice of Peace* of his crime, that he may be reproved for his fault as the Law directs. In theſe caſes every one muſt be left to his *own prudence*, but you muſt not think that a pretence of Prudence will *always excuſe* your want of zeal for the honour of GOD, and the credit of his *Laws*. If you know not how to act in theſe caſes, you would do well to join with ſome *Society* for *Reformation*, or at leaſt to conſult and adviſe with ſome of the *members* of ſuch *ſocieties*, that you may proceed with ſafety and ſucceſs.

AND according to the advice of a late excellent Biſhop of St. *Aſaph*, in a *Sermon* upon *Swearing*, printed in the year 1721, let theſe directions be obſerved.——" Don't ſuffer any that depend upon you, " and are under *your care* more immediately, to " commit this ſin without puniſhing them for it. " Let not any of your *children* dare to ſwear without your anger, and immediate chaſtiſement. " You will ſave them hereby from much miſchief " here, and from GOD's anger hereafter. Keep " not a *ſervant* under your Roof that is guilty of " this wicked practice; their labours will not be " bleſs'd by GOD to you. Employ no *workmen* " that will not do their buſineſs without ſwearing. Relieve no *Poor* that are guilty of thus " diſhonouring GOD. You would, (ſays the *Biſhop)* in a little time ſee a great change and Reformation of manners if you would take theſe " courſes; and thoſe who by your means are re-

" claimed

" claimed from these cursed habits, would in a
" little time be very *thankful to you*, and bless God
" for you.

Upon the whole, let us not content our selves in *barely complaining* of the wickedness of the times, and making our selves and others *melancholy*, and full of apprehensions of Divine Judgments on that account; but let us *bestir our selves*, and do all we can in our *respective places* to mend the times, and the people with whom we converse. And God grant that *our light may so shine before men*, in all instances of Piety both in Lip and Life, that *others* may thereby be excited *to glorify our Father who is in Heaven.*

To whom, with the Son, and Spirit of Grace and Holiness, be all Reverence, Obedience, and Praise, world without End. Amen.

FINIS.